



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

Settle Inn
2800 Husker Circle
Lincoln, NE
402.435-8100

October 12, 2004
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: *Sharon Bloechle, Kim Boyce, Don Crouch, Sue Gieschen, Kay Grone, Gayle Hahn, Sandy Ham, Marc Hultine, David Jelinek, Les Kimmons, Tim Kolb, Frank Lloyd, Vicki Rasmussen, Pearl Van Zandt, Merwyn Vavrina*

Absent: *Eileen Curry, Michael Newman, Susan Rocker, Mark Schultz*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order

A get-well card for Mike Newman was passed around for everyone to sign. He is home.

Jason Gieschen opened the meeting by singing the National Anthem

I Public Comment: None

II. Welcome New Members

- A. State Board was notified in September of the vacancies on the committee.
- B. Marc Hultine—Western Vocational Services. They are a direct service provider.
- C. Kim Boyce—Kim Boyce, is an Administrator with Department of Labor and administers programs for the mentally ill. He has worked with individuals with severe mental illness issues. He assisted in creating a policy to get of the laws changed to make it fairer to individuals with mental handicaps to get and retain employment.

There is one mandatory position still unfilled, that was held by Jack Shepard. Don will be contacting those people Jack has suggested. (Representative from Special Education)

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve minutes moved by Sharon Bloechle. Motion seconded by Merwyn Vavrina
Motion carried, agenda approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes from August 10, 2004

- A. Noted correction—Sue Gieschen approved as Vice Chair page 10. Revision was sent out prior to this meeting

Motion moved by Merwyn Vavrina. Motion seconded by motion Vicki Rasmussen
Motion passed, minutes approved.

V. Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

1. Nebraska received an additional \$275,000 in federal funds through the end of year reallocation process. We had enough state money to match. This money was left over money that other states didn't use. There were a few states that lost significant amounts of money. Iowa lost over 2 million dollars.
2. The 2004 Industry Tour was sponsored by the Department of Labor was a big success. Every year businesses are recognized by Department of Labor for various contributions. This year it was those business that were hiring people that experience a disability. VR and ATP provided DOL a list of over 150 employers to be recognized. There were meetings in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Omaha, Columbus and Lincoln at the State Capitol. Frank spoke for 10 minutes. A videotape was sent by the Governor to those locations where he was unable to attend. He did attend the one in Lincoln. A few employers spoke about the people they have hired and the wonderful characteristics they bring to their business.
3. Federal Review. This review was in collaboration with Special Education, VR and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired working with transition students. Three reviewers from Washington, two from Kansas City, along with staff from SPED, VR and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired participated. They were taken to Southeast High school to meet with staff there. They were also taken to Omaha to meet with the VR staff that are working with the younger students 14-16 year old.

They were taken through the Juvenile Justice System program. JJS, VR and Omaha Public Schools has contracted with two GED teachers and 104 juveniles have passed their GED. This education/employment program has been a big success.

Pearl thought the review was a wonderful opportunity to showcase VR, SPED and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Jerry Harris one of the federal reviewers was very impressed with the high level of collaboration.

4. In early November Frank, Margy and Mel will be going out to do individual interviews with VR staff. They plan to meet with all staff, excluding supervisors. They will meet with each staff individually for up to 1 hour. The purpose is to focus on employee strengths and where they can make their best contributions to achieve their agency goals. They will discuss with them what they like about their work as well as their concerns. After finishing with each office, they will sit down and discuss any concerns they heard with the Office Director. The plan is to do this once a year.
5. Transition Planner for Parents: This is almost ready to go to the printer. The language has been changed to focus on the student. Lots of little changes, making it read as if talking to the student about their plan. The final copy will be brought to the next meeting.

6. The Pre-Assessment committee was formed to establish criteria to assure that staff are working with appropriate clients. For example—if there is a history of alcoholism, they should be referred to a treatment program, as they are not ready for VR. Vicki Rasmussen who is a member of this committee will report back to the Service committee. There are many factors that need to be considered. More information will be provided to the council in future meetings.
7. Transition Project: Two VR staff from the Omaha office are working on a system including resources on how to work with transition students age 14-15-16. The first part of November they will be meeting with educators in the Omaha area to find resources that would be beneficial to this age group. They hope that by next fall a system with resources will be available to the schools. Resources will include lesson plans, sequence of activities, questions/answers, etc. This will all center around issues that are appropriate for transitioning this age group. Classroom activities as well as community resources will be developed, along with information on how to set up career fairs and job/employer tours.

VI. Old Business

A. IPE Notebook (*Dennis King*)

SRC members received copies of the notebook at the August meeting.

Dennis King mentioned that they have been working on the notebook for the past three years. The purpose was to develop a process and the materials to implement out in the field to help achieve the goals of the agency. This was piloted in Norfolk and Omaha. There have been a significant amount of changes since the pilot. This is now being implemented across the state in every office. Everyone has had an opportunity to use the materials.

The goal was to engage consumers early in the process, getting them involved in the IPE process. Helping them make an informed choice, documenting that this has occurred. This promotes best practice and assures it is being applied uniformly across the state.

This process will assist the service specialists during the placement process information gathered in this front-end process will help consumers complete resumes, applications and preparing for interviews.

Any reference to career has been removed from the notebook and replaced with jobs. We wanted to emphasize that the notebook is not only for those pursuing a career requiring post-secondary training, but also for those wanting or needing direct placement.

Frank wanted members to keep in mind that the notebook is not the entire front-end process. The other pieces are orientation, generally a group orientation, employment discussion; career planning discussion, and IPE development.

Sharon asked if some portions of the notebook gave too much work for consumers.. Are we going to be turning some people off? Dennis responded that the materials are needed to help make the consumer successful and to get enough information about the consumer. He was only aware of two instances in which the consumers were refusing to complete the notebook. The first was a consumer who had personal and mental health issues as well as being homeless. The

consumer was unable to sit for 10 minutes at a time and was easily distracted. He was taken into a separate room with the staff person and then he would not leave as someone was actually listening to him. The second one came in and just wanted a job. They didn't want to complete the information. This needs to be approached from a constructive standpoint by staff. We want staff to feel comfortable and able to explain the materials and make it meaningful to the consumer showing how this will benefit them. Staff are doing a much better job with the materials. Consumers can also take the notebook with them and someone at home can assist them. We also have work centers where they can get help. If needed, staff will read text to those consumers that can't read.

Frank stated that consumers are as different as the population. It is important to create that personal network, people that can help them. Sue likes that it makes this process standard throughout the state. They are thinking about making this available on the web, giving consumers another option for completing the notebook.

Dave commented that he generally spends one-hour in the Employment Discussion. On Tuesday and Wednesdays from 3:30 – 5:00 p.m., staff in the Grand Island Office are available for any consumer who needs assistance.

Frank stated that this process still has a long way to go and VR will be continually working with it to improve it.

Les asked if this could be used with the transition students? It can and is being used with transition students. A pilot project in Omaha is working on the development of materials more appropriate for students.

Sandy asked what is a reasonable time frame to have the notebook completed? When a consumer comes in, eligibility is determined right away before starting on the notebook. VR discourages consumers from going through the notebook too fast,. They can take as much time as they like—this process is flexible.

Dennis recognized Sandy Ham for all of her hard work. If it were not for her efforts, it wouldn't be where it is today.

B. Interagency Committee Survey Summary Report (*Don Crouch*)

One and a half years ago the satisfaction survey went out to referral sources. Eileen Curry put together the statistics and broke that information down into offices. Information gathered from the survey about each office was sent to that office. The survey is on the SRC website.

Don sent out the survey responses to staff that were recognized/mentioned in the survey so they could see the comments made.

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The first week in November is the regional CAP meeting. People from Iowa, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska will meet with RSA staff in Kansas City to talk about CAP and VR issues.

Vic has closed 10 cases since the last meeting. Members were given the CAP report for October.

B. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

The voting conference that SILC sponsored was a success. The conference entitled "Empowering Nebraskans: Discover the Disability Vote" was held at Omaha's new Hilton hotel directly across from the new Quest Center. Of the approximately 75 people who registered about 45 attended. The featured national level speaker was Mr. Jim Dickson from the American Association of Persons with Disabilities (AAPD) based in Washington DC. Other speakers included Mr. Tim Shaw and Brad Meurrens of Nebraska Advocacy Services; Mr. Neil Erickson, Deputy Secretary of State for Elections from the office of the Nebraska Secretary of State; Mr. Chuck Leach, SILC Chair; and Ms. Kathy Hoell, SILC Executive Director.

Tim Kolb mentioned that a new computerized voting machine was on display at the conference. The machine was accessible to most people with disabilities. Although they will not be available for the coming election, accessible voting machines will eventually be available almost everywhere in the U.S. probably by the next election. Tim stated that he could have used the machine without too much assistance, because it was able to be equipped with a "sip and puff" attachment for people who experience quadriplegia .

Tim also reported that the SILC had been successful in obtaining a couple of new grants and continued to look for more. The SILC uses grant dollars to expand and strengthen its advocacy operations.

The SILC Ad Hoc Committee on the Medicaid Insurance for Workers with Disabilities (MIWD) upgrade legislation (a.k.a. the Medicaid Buy-In upgrade) will meet on October 27, 2004 with Jeff Santema, Counsel to the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee in Sen. Jensen's office. The SILC Ad Hoc is working on a Ticket to Work version of the current MIWD to enable more people with disabilities to seek and maintain competitive employment without fear of losing their Medicaid eligibility. The group is seeking to eliminate the current MIWD eligibility Test A which has proven to be problematic for many Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those people that are on SSDI. Another modification SILC intends to introduce to the upgrade is a "Medically Improved" clause which is intended to prevent a Continuing Disability Review (CDR). A CDR would ordinarily be triggered by employment and result in the individual being declared "Not Disabled" due to Social Security's narrow definition of "disability" and, thereby, a loss of Medicaid eligibility would occur.

The SILC Ad Hoc Committee, during its meeting with Jeff Santema, will also have Liz Ruska from the Legislature's Fiscal Office present for the purpose of explaining to her how the new upgrade legislation should not create a significant fiscal impact on the state. As the SILC was successful in explaining during the creation of the first MIWD that there would be no more than 100 people taking advantage of it in the first year of its existence, the SILC hopes to show Ms. Ruska that those people who will be eligible for the new MIWD are already on Medicaid.

Tim also reported that he is now successfully employed as the Consumer Network Coordinator for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Tim makes use of a Ticket to Work incentive program under Social Security's 1619B and is no longer receiving SSI!

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

No Report.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Satisfaction (*Sandy Ham*)

They discussed the need for two surveys. The survey would concern the IPE notebook. One survey would be consumer oriented with the second one targeted for staff that are using the notebook. There is a need for feedback. They are concentrating on putting together questions. The committee asked the rest of the council to give them suggestions of possible questions. Contact Sandy Ham

2. Interagency Annual Report (*Eileen Curry*)

Gayle was the only member in attendance. Kim Boyce and Marc Hultine will be joining this committee. Gayle filled them in as to past activities of the committee. No report.

3. Strategic Issues (*Mark Schultz*)

Mark was not in attendance. The committee discussed previous issues that have been resolved and have selected three new goals.

- a. The Telework Program. This is being subcontracted with Easter Seals.
- b. VR Equity Assistance Program. Low interest loans are being made through three banks in Omaha. VR is utilizing Wayne Miller and once a consumer completes his program, they can be approved for this special funding/loan.
- c. Transition. Reviewing the system to prevent fewer dropouts. Looking into post-gradational programs.

Sharon commented that she has heard that there are some schools whose counselors are encouraging kids to drop out and get their GED. She thinks this is happening in the larger school districts like Omaha and Lincoln, particularly with ADHD children. The GED process has changed and not exactly easy to get. There is more writing involved and for ADHD children, written expression can be difficult. Frank interjected that transition services will be very important to this teen population. VR needs to develop a program to help these kids stay in school. Teachers in the classroom are responsible for setting up the transition plan and kids have a wide variety of options, making it more difficult for the teacher. Makes it more important to have VR involved in the transition.

The next meeting Frank will have new information concerning transition. They would like the new program to be ready by next fall and plan to implement this to a few

select schools. The schools will be required to commit to certain things before VR staff commit their time.

Tim commented that the school system doesn't educate people, they process people. They are all put in a hopper and they come out. They have established a relationship with a group of people with great differences. They have an obligation to get to the end of the process or it is a disgrace.

Kim discussed the shortcoming of schools—that they are set up to work with more auditory/visual learners. They have difficulty working with those students that learn differently. DOL is working to channel youth dollars into setting up community relationships. Building a relationship to secure spots for kids 14-16 years that are at risk for dropping out. Having them work with a liaison, a person in a business. Giving them a job, like stocking shelves, having them learn and this growing into other job possibilities. Creating transferable skills that will go on, or something they can fall back on. Government needs to partner better with businesses.

VIII. Reports

A. Case Review Instrument (*Don Crouch*)

Don distributed the case review instrument. This utilizes QUEST's electronic data and the paper file. There are two purposes; to assure the consumers rights and looking at the timeliness of service. The questions address these two issues, mainly looking at the timeliness of determining eligibility. The instrument also contains federal issues, to assure that cases are meeting federal standards. Hopefully this instrument will be in QUEST one day. The Office Directors have been using this instrument for a month now. Office Directors need to complete five per month. Don will be reviewing looking at consistency.

Don commented that the placement review form is newer than the case review form. Some of the Office Directors are using it, and someday it might be an official form. Frank had this developed to see if staff were using the new placement standards, looking at contacts.

B. VR/SPED Federal Review (Frank/Pearl Van Zandt)

Frank thought the review went well. The review involved Special Education, VR and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They discussed with the feds the collaboration with Special Education and VR. They got to see some of the project and to meet with the two staff from Omaha that are putting together the transition program for the 14-16 age group. As the transition program develops and occurs, Washington will be watching Nebraska.

Nebraska General is the only state that has its own transition program. Most states don't have a separate program. We won't get federal credit as they won't be opened in the adult program. We will get state credit. Let staff work with them in school, if they get a job we will take credit for it. Federal report will have a lower number since these cases won't be reported. We will be able to service students in the transition program without being in the adult program. VR doesn't push people through to make the data requirements.

VR will share the report with the council when they receive it.

C. State Staff, October 26 – 27 (Don Crouch)

State staff is October 26-27 In Kearney. This two-day conference is held once a year to bring staff together. The funding for the training is through a federal grant that VR applies for once a year. This can only be spent on training.

Merwyn attended last year and was really impressed with the offices being recognized for their goals and the staff. He was particularly impressed with the seniority of staff, commitment of VR and their staff. Gayle attended last year and encourages council members to attend.

D. Expense Reimbursements – new guidelines (Don Crouch)

The Department of Education has implemented new expense reimbursement guidelines. Receipts will be needed to claim for meals. If you don't have a receipt you will need to list the restaurant, city/state of where you ate, the time and amount.

Merwyn asked about the Tech Act. He thought it was approved, but had no figures.

Tim mentioned that he was having some problems getting his email so he provided another email address-- tim_kolb68939@yahoo.com

Gayle's email address is: ghahn@ne.easterseals.com

Frank mentioned that Washington is going to make funds available to Region 7—the three RECP programs to put together training for the state rehab councils. The information on this should be out shortly. The training will be done by the regional staff, they will come to Lincoln. Frank sees that RSA is wanting the councils to have a much larger capacity, to be more of an advocacy type of council. The training will be at least a day. Don will contact council members concerning the training.

Sue made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Sharon Bloechle seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned